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ABSTRACT

This article, published in Learning Notes, a house organ of Cleveland State University, describes the Career Guidance Institute--a program designed to provide counselors with firsthand experiences of the business and industrial centers of Greater Cleveland. Program participants, counselors and career education specialists from the Cleveland Public Schools, participated in an eight-week program which included in-plant experience for six weeks. The overall purpose of the Career Guidance Institute was to provide career development specialists with knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for them to assist economically disadvantaged students to make realistic career choices, and to make an easier transition from school to work. The eight-week program was divided into an orientation phase, an on-the-job phase, and a debriefing phase. (Author/HMV)

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OUT OF THE IVORY TOWER

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OUT OF THE IVORY TOWER

By Lewis E. Patterson

A frequent criticism of persons whose profession is educating others rests on the fact that they frequently become isolated from the world of work outside their particular educational institution. For persons whose educational role is counseling, that isolation can be especially crucial because a segment of their professional content is a knowledge of the world of work.

A program of the Department of Educational Specialists, the Career Guidance Institute, is designed to provide counselors with firsthand experience in the business and industrial complex of Greater Cleveland. The program began in the summer of 1974 with financial support from the National Alliance of Businessmen, the Jennings Foundation, and fourteen local companies. The Metropolitan Cleveland Jobs Council (a N.A.B. affiliate) provided planning and administrative services, the Businessmen's Interracial Committee provided support and consultation, and the Cleveland State University provided the academic program. Program participants were counselors and career education specialists from the Cleveland Public Schools (with one participant from East Cleveland). Each participated in an eight-week program which included in-plant experience for six weeks.

Objectives

The overall purpose of the Career Guidance Institute is to provide career development specialists with knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for them to assist economically disadvantaged students in making realistic career choices and in making the

transition from school to work. It is also our purpose (through personal contact) to acquaint business and industrial personnel with the problems schools face in helping economically disadvantaged youth develop career motivation and necessary skills.

More specific objectives are:

1. To acquaint career development specialists with existing and emerging career opportunities available in the private sector to high school graduates, and to explore the employer requirements for those jobs.
2. To make educators and employers more aware of the need to match career interests of disadvantaged students with the job requirements of private sector employers.
3. To help employers and educators better understand the problems and attitudes of minority students toward school and employment.
4. To establish the beginnings of regular working relationships between educators and top-level business and industrial managers.
5. To encourage career development specialists to develop specific follow-up plans for implementing their learnings in career education and counseling programs.

Program

The eight-week program in summer, 1974, was divided into an orientation phase, an on-the-job phase, and a debriefing phase. During the first week the program participants were oriented to the purposes of the Institute as seen by the several cooperating sponsors and were invited to define purposes of their own. Content sessions included concepts from the psychology of career development,

procedures for analyzing jobs, concepts of career education, and an overview of the organizational structure of a typical large industry. Participants were informed of their industrial placements and were given necessary information about the routines that would be expected in their field placements (including instructions about what clothing one wears in different settings and the mandate that they would keep the same work hours as the employees in their host company).

Weeks two through seven of the Institute were devoted to field experiences. Each counselor was assigned to a particular company which assumed the responsibility of devising a program to familiarize the counselor with the total work environment while paying special attention to entry-level jobs. In all cases the industrial participants were large, but their business pursuits differed, ranging from auto manufacturing and steel-making to public utilities and banking. In many instances "hands-on" experiences which contributed to the production of the host company were arranged for part of the field time. Counselors were encouraged to talk with employees about their lives and their work, so as to develop a comprehensive view of the workers' lives. The depth and duration of the experience far exceeded that usually available to outsiders and was intended to simulate actual employment in a company - with the added dimension of the University-enhanced capacity for observing and assimilating the meaning of the experience.

The final week of the program was devoted to debriefing. Participants who had experienced different companies (19 counselors in 14 companies) were encouraged to share the experiences they had and to pool their insights. Finally, each participant was asked to

submit three assignments that were made earlier. The first was a series of job descriptions detailing entry requirements, duties, work environment, etc. attached to entry-level jobs observed. The second was a case study of an actual worker, taking into account his developmental history, his job selection, and his job satisfaction. The third assignment was a plan for a project the participant would implement in his school, showing application of the summer program to the education of youth. Plans included programs of in-service training for fellow teachers to share or replicate the summer experience and programs of "employability training" for high school youth.

Measured Outcomes

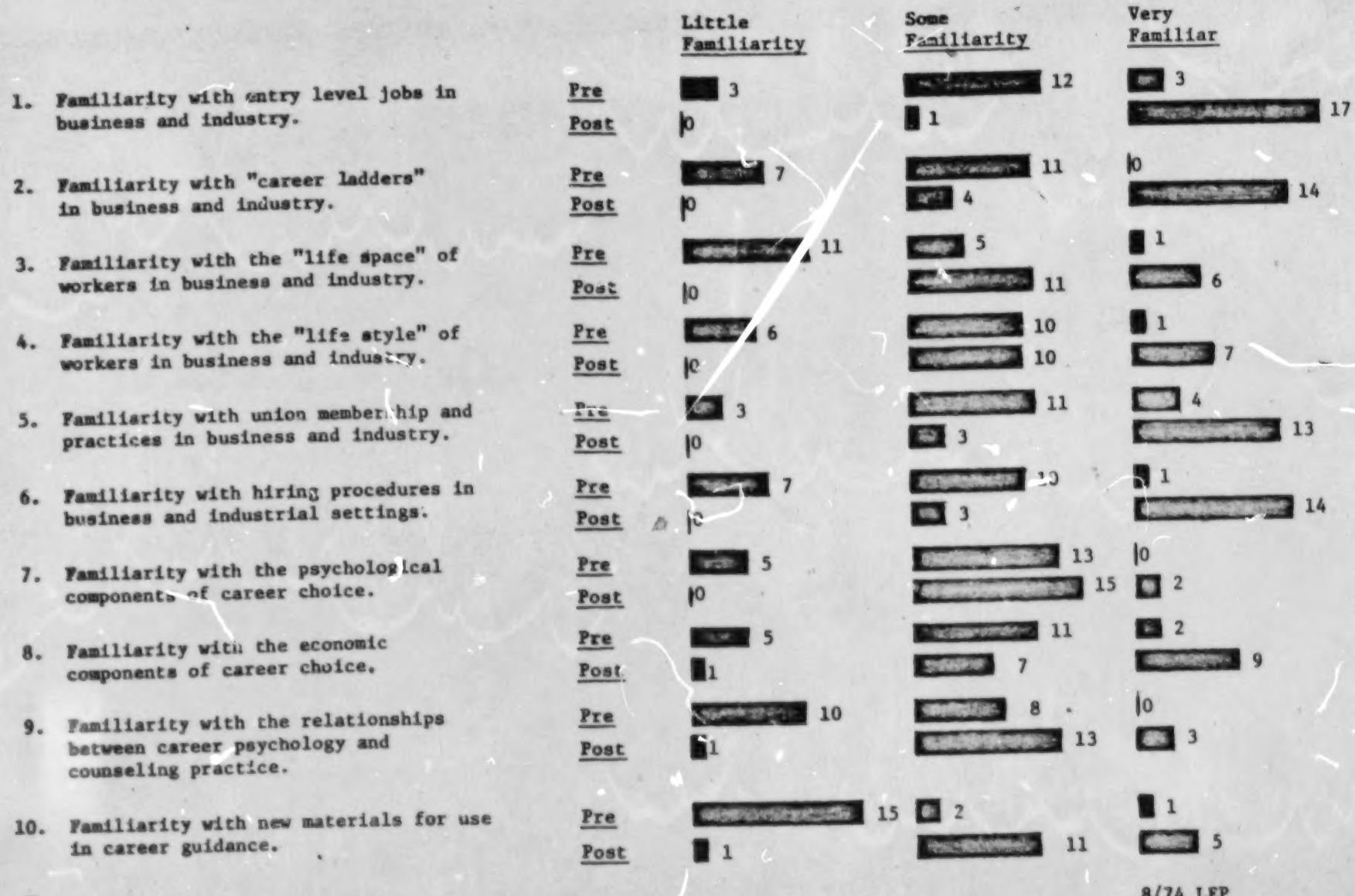
Graph I shows pre- and post-workshop responses to a survey seeking self-report responses about knowledge deemed essential for counselors to function effectively in career guidance. Participants were asked to respond to a survey form (of which these items were the first part) at the first meeting of the Institute. They were not told that the survey forms would be administered again at the end of the Institute, and they did not have access to their initial responses when they repeated the survey form on the last day of the workshop. A quick examination of the graph shows marked shifts in participants' statements about their knowledge in all ten categories.

- Graph Here -

It is clear that counselors gained markedly in their familiarity with entry-level jobs and with career ladders. Seventeen of eighteen participants claimed to be "very familiar" with entry-level jobs

GRAPH I

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF OBJECTIVES - SELF-REPORT
Summary of Pre and Post Workshop Survey
Career Guidance Institute
The Cleveland State University


Little Familiarity
Some Familiarity
Very Familiar
1. Familiarity with entry level jobs in business and industry.
Pre 3 12 3
Post 0 1 17
2. Familiarity with "career ladders" in business and industry.
Pre 7 11 0
Post 0 4 14
3. Familiarity with the "life space" of workers in business and industry.
Pre 11 5 1
Post 0 11 6
4. Familiarity with the "life style" of workers in business and industry.
Pre 6 10 1
Post 0 10 7
5. Familiarity with union membership and practices in business and industry.
Pre 3 11 4
Post 0 3 13
6. Familiarity with hiring procedures in business and industrial settings.
Pre 7 10 1
Post 0 3 14
7. Familiarity with the psychological components of career choice.
Pre 5 13 0
Post 0 15 2
8. Familiarity with the economic components of career choice.
Pre 5 11 2
Post 1 7 9
9. Familiarity with the relationships between career psychology and counseling practice.
Pre 10 8 0
Post 1 13 3
10. Familiarity with new materials for use in career guidance.
Pre 15 2 1
Post 1 11 5

■ = one individual
n = 18

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after the Institute. While none of the participants claimed to be "very familiar" with career ladders before the Institute, fourteen of the eighteen so reported subsequent to the Institute. There were marked shifts in familiarity with the "life space" and "life style" of workers in business and industry.

One of the most significant outcomes for counselors and their clients is the increase in familiarity with hiring practices as reported by program participants. Seven of the participants reported "little familiarity" with hiring practices and only one claimed to be "very familiar" with hiring practices prior to the Institute. Additional data collected prior to the Institute showed that four participants had never been in a personnel office and eight had visited a personnel office for a period of less than one day. After the Institute, fourteen participants felt that they were now very familiar with hiring practices and all had spent one day or more in a personnel office observing those practices.

Participants also reported gains in the more intellective processes of applying economics and career psychology to counseling practice.

Conclusion

Results of the survey form, part of which is reported above, as well as the informal assessment of the 1974 summer experience led to the conclusion that a great deal had been accomplished. Participants developed creative and practical plans for new activities in their schools. The industrial personnel who had worked with the participants reported satisfaction in the interaction that had

occurred and new understandings of the problems of the schools. It seemed clear that educators had needed to leave their encapsulated worlds for a time and had gained from doing so.

Subsequent to the summer program of 1974, all sponsoring groups renewed their commitment to the concept of industry and university working together to improve the preparation of career development specialists for the schools. Plans are underway for a revised and improved Institute for summer, 1975, pending final commitment of funds by industries experiencing the pinch of the economic downturn.